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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8635
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3797
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2641
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6377
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 6203
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2786
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 2008

ANKARA 00000156 001.2 OF 003

In Today's Papers

Four Al-Qaeda Terrorists Killed in Fighting with Police in Gaziantep

All papers report that on Thursday, security forces raided 18 al-Qaeda 'cell houses' in the southeastern provinces of Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş. Four terrorists were killed in the operations, which lasted 13 hours. Papers say Mehmet Polat, who was killed during yesterday's clash, trained in Afghanistan and was the newly designated leader of al-Qaeda in Turkey. Police seized explosives that were similar to those used in al-Qaeda attacks against the British Consulate and HSBC bank in Istanbul in November 2003. Suleyman Kamci, the governor of Gaziantep, said police seized seven guns, 2 AK-47 rifles, ammunition, 75 kg of ammonium nitrate, 40 kg of sulfur, and 10 kg of fertilizers. Governor Kamci noted the al-Qaeda cell was planning attacks within Turkey. Mainstream Milliyet claims they were preparing to attack US and Israeli diplomatic targets in Turkey.

AKP and MHP Agree to Remove the Headscarf Ban in Universities

All papers report the ruling AKP and opposition MHP have agreed to remove headscarf restrictions at universities. The AKP wants to add a clause to article 42 of the constitution that says "no one can be deprived of his right to higher education because of his clothing." Article 10 guarantees equality before the law regardless of language, race, sex, or religion. The MHP wants to add to article 10, "There shall be no headscarf discrimination with regard to the use of public services." Article 42 guarantees that no one be deprived of their right to education, conducted under state supervision in line with the principles of Ataturk. Under the formula agreed on by the two parties, students would be allowed to wear the headscarf, but it would still be banned for teachers. MHP deputy chairman Cihan Pacaci said the package would be finalized in one or two days. Papers expect the changes to be submitted to the parliament for approval next week. Papers report the rectors of

four major Turkish universities released a statement warning the new regulation would lead to divisions in universities.

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports a senior EU official said the new regulations would put pressure on students who choose not to wear the headscarf. "The EU defends religious freedom, but this does not mean the EU will approve radical moves," said the source, stressing that harming secularism would reduce Turkey's EU accession chances. Mainstream papers and columnists express concern the AKP-MHP move could increase political tensions in Turkey, and that financial markets are closely watching the headscarf debate.

Investigations into the 'Ergenekon' Gang Continue

All papers report investigations were launched into the activities of the leaders of the nationalist group 'Ergenekon.' Four of the 35 Ergenekon suspects detained earlier this week have been released. Papers carry extensive claims suggesting the nationalists may have been behind a number of past bomb attacks and assassinations. Ergenekon, headed by retired brigadier-general Veli Kucuk, was also planning a series of spectacular bomb attacks and assassinations aimed at destabilizing the country in order to topple the ruling AKP government in 2009. In addition, the gang was plotting to kill Nobel Prize winning novelist Orhan Pamuk, and was seeking some USD 2 million and a Glock gun for the assassination. Police have monitored Ergenekon for several years and have compiled several thousand pages of reports on the group and its activities, according to papers.

Karamanlis Pushes for a Solution on Cyprus Issue

Sabah, Milliyet, Zaman, Vatan, Hurriyet, Aksam, Cumhuriyet and others: Greek PM Karamanlis visited Ataturk's Mausoleum before he delivered a speech at Bilkent University yesterday. In his speech, Karamanlis extended support to Turkey's EU membership and said "A European Turkey will benefit the people of Turkey, the region and the continent as a whole. Turkey and Greece should leave behind all enmities. The time has come for a solution in Cyprus." Karamanlis

ANKARA 00000156 002.2 OF 003

was received by President Gul and met with CHP leader Baykal before he left Ankara for Istanbul, where he visited Patriarch Bartholomeos.

Editorial Commentary on Reopening of Halki Seminary
Yasemin Congar wrote in leftist Taraf (1/25): "Greek PM Karamanlis expressed hope for the reopening of the Greek Patriarchate's seminary, along with respect for the rights of Turkey's Greek minority. Everyone in Turkey who believes in religious freedom supports these issues. PM Erdogan did not use precise language in response to these requests; instead, he said the government 'was working on it.' If the ruling AKP manages to turn its goodwill into good deeds, the seminary will be reopened. Such an action will be revolutionary; the seminary has been closed since 1971. Karamanlis was correct when he called the Patriarchate Turkey's 'passport to Europe.'"

Turkey - US Nuclear Cooperation

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Yeni Safak, Zaman: Most media outlets report US President Bush submitted the US/Turkey Nuclear Cooperation agreement (the "123" agreement) to Congress for approval. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports in "Turkey-US Nuclear Cooperation" that the two countries "are preparing a new cooperation after their intelligence-sharing cooperation against the PKK." This cooperation provides for the "peaceful creation of nuclear technology," with the "goal of producing electricity." In "Bush Presents a US-Turkey Nuclear Cooperation Agreement to Congress," Islamist-oriented Zaman writes that "Ankara's peaceful production of nuclear energy will strengthen the political struggle against the proliferation nuclear weapons." In "The First Step in a Nuclear Cooperation between the US and Turkey," Mainstream Hurriyet writes that "the US will transfer nuclear technology to Turkey for the peaceful production of nuclear energy." Liberal Radikal writes "the agreement was drafted in 2000, but was suspended due to concerns Turkish agents could pass nuclear secrets to countries like Pakistan, but those concerns have now been resolved."

Israel Angered by Erdogan's Comments.

Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others: All news

outlets are reporting on the aftermath of Prime Minister Erdogan's criticism of the Israeli Blockade. Nationalist-oriented Cumhuriyet writes in "Erdogan Disappoints Israel," Israeli Foreign Ministry officials expressed their disappointment to Israeli newspapers, "in light of the friendly relations between Turkey and Israel, Israel expects a different reaction from a state that is itself fighting terror." On Tuesday, Erdogan stated to an AKP meeting "It is not understandable to punish two million people because some of them are doing wrong things." Mainstream Sabah reports "Turkish Ambassador Namik Tan was summoned to the Israeli Foreign Ministry to discuss Erdogan's remarks." Islamist-oriented Zaman writes that unnamed Turkish Foreign ministry officials said "Israel did not protest Erdogan's comments; they only conveyed the sensitivity of the issue." In "Erdogan's Remarks Strain Relations," Mainstream Milliyet opines Erdogan's remarks "opened the road for tensions between Turkey and Israel." Mainstream Hurriyet argues that "Erdogan angered Israel" by his "sharp criticism" which was answered by a "sharp response" from Israel that Erdogan's criticism caused "dreams to be broken" in Israel.

Editorial Commentary on Erdogan's Remarks on the West
Ergun Babahan warned in mainstream Sabah (1/25): "If Turkey wants to be a member of the European Union, Turkey has to adopt Western regulations and values. When we mention "the West" we are not talking about a super market where you can choose items based on your taste. There is a series of values at the foundation of a market economy and a social state; these moral values include the supremacy of law. Therefore, Prime Minister Erdogan's criticisms of the West is hugely unfortunate. Erdogan recently said "Instead of studying Western science and arts, we have adopted moral indecency from the West, which conflicts with our values." Turkey will have

ANKARA 00000156 003.2 OF 003

to accept Western values if it is going to be a member of the EU. Otherwise, Erdogan's statement can be interpreted to mean the EU is an indecent institution and Turkey is just pretending to integrate."

Editorial Commentary on US Backing Israel in the Middle East
Samir Salha commented in Islamist-leaning Zaman (1/25): "The aftermath of President Bush's recent trip to Middle East deserves close analysis. The visit indicated that, once again, the US favors Israel regardless of its actions. Even Secretary Rice warned President Bush about his over-flattering remarks to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert. In the midst of Bush's Middle East visit, Israel launched another attack on Gaza. This illustrates Israel's perception that it has unconditional support from the US. Once again, it is clear there will be no solution to the region's problems as long as Washington continues to view the issues through Israeli lenses. Moreover, there was one more dark result of this visit. The Bush administration has laid the groundwork for an attack on Iran. We are about to see accusations against Iran similar to those against Saddam Hussein before the US invaded Iraq."

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- Turkey's influential business grouping TUSIAD chairperson Arzuhan Yalcindag said Turkish women struggle with much more serious problems than the headscarf issue.

- The court proceedings against the pro-Kurdish DTP deputy Aysel Tugluk, who is accused of spreading PKK propaganda, have been suspended due to her parliamentary immunity.

- Deputy Prime Minister Nazim Ekren said "Turkey is a safe haven for investors amid the international economic turmoil."

- Economy Minister Mehmet Simsek said in a press interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos that "Turkey is better equipped to weather the current global market turmoil than it has been in the past."

International News

- Greek media says Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis failed to make any visible progress in bilateral ties during his visit to Turkey.
- The British Foreign Ministry has ensured the London-based Anti-Terror Turkish Platform will monitor PKK activities in Britain.
- Iranian President Ahmadinejad has accepted an invitation from Iraqi President Talabani to visit Baghdad.
- "Kosovo's declaration of independence is a matter of days away," the Serbian province's Prime Minister Hashim Thaci said Thursday.

WILSON